

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ARCHÆOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA
ARCHÆOLOGICAL
LIBRARY

ACCESSION NO. 23039

CALL No. 704.940954/Coo

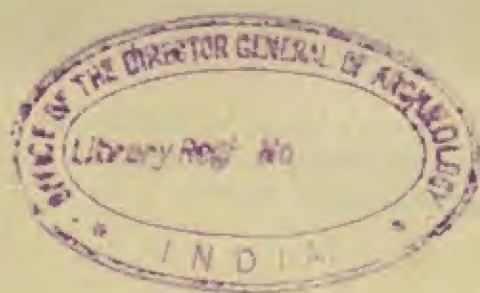
D.G.A. 79

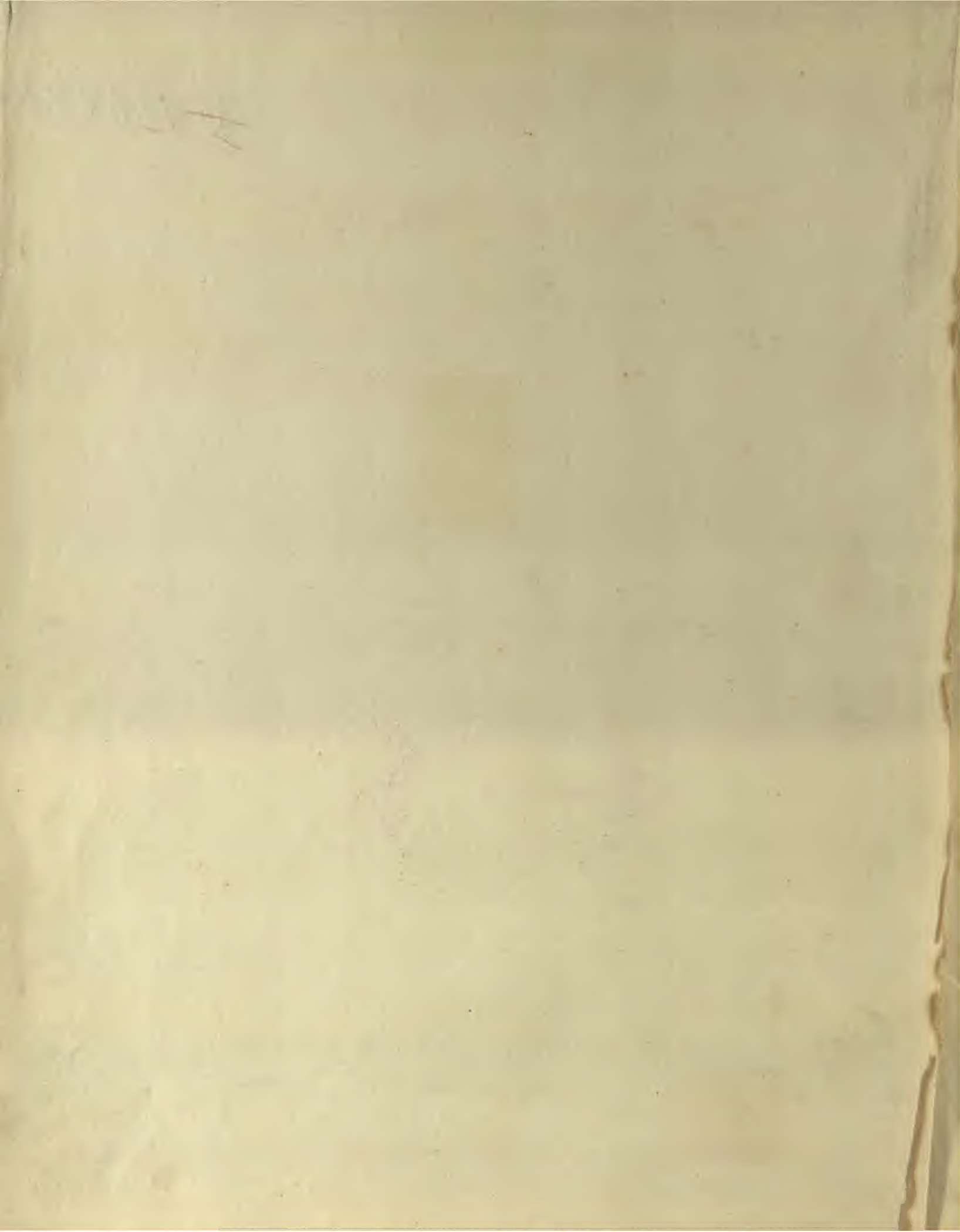
~~D/12/68(a)~~

~~1368(a)~~



~~D 1368a~~





~~D1399~~

80/28 Vol. I.

No. 1

JULY, 1928

~~3920~~
~~440~~

EASTERN ART

A QUARTERLY



EDITED BY
HAMILTON BELL
LANGDON WARNER
HORACE H. F. JAYNE

THE EDITORS OF *Eastern Art* ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE
FOR THE OPINIONS ADVANCED BY
THEIR CONTRIBUTORS

D1368(a)

704.940954
C00

23039

(132)

PUBLISHED AT
MEMORIAL HALL, FAIRMOUNT PARK
PHILADELPHIA

COPYRIGHTED 1928
BY EASTERN ART

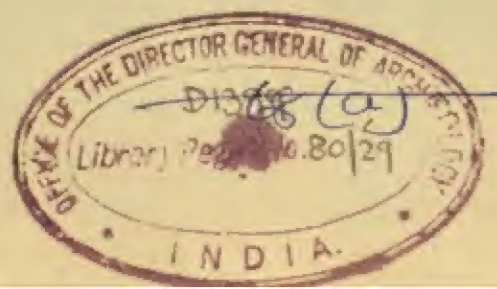




FIG. 1.
INDRA-SĀLA-GUHĀ,
DHARHUT PAÑCASIKHA'S
HARP ON MIDDLE LEFT



FIG. 2. DETAIL FROM SYĀMA JĀTĀKA, WEST GATE, SĀÑCĪ:
INDRA WITH HEADDRESS AND FLASK IN CENTRE



FIG. 3. INDRA-SĀLA-GUHĀ, NORTH GATE,
SĀÑCĪ. INDRA (?) MIDDLE CENTRE,
PAÑCASIKHA MIDDLE RIGHT



FIG. 4. INDRA-SĀLA-GUHĀ, BODHGAYĀ
(SHOWS ONLY PAÑCASIKHA)

EARLY INDIAN ICONOGRAPHY

ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY

I. INDRA, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO 'INDRA'S VISIT.'

The iconography of mediaeval Indian art is now easily accessible; but the material for a study of the early types, very important for the history of the iconography and of the religious conceptions, has only been partially published,¹ and never conveniently brought together. I refer here only to the anthropomorphic images. The deities can be traced still earlier by means of their symbols, Śiva, for example by the bull, trident, or mountain of three peaks surmounted by a crescent; but this investigation can be more conveniently made in the form of a general study of the early symbols. I propose therefore in a series of articles of moderate length to study one by one the iconography of the Indian deities as they appear anthropomorphically on the coins and in the early sculptures, mainly before the Gupta period.

The present first instalment is devoted to Indra or Śakra, the well-known Vedic and Hindu deity, who plays an important part also in Buddhist legends. In Pali his name appears as Sakka; he is also known as Vajrapāṇi, from the *vajra* or thunderbolt which is his attribute.² He rides on the cloud-elephant Airāvata; and as will appear, he is frequently represented as carrying a flask, which contains *amṛta*, the Water of Life. For a general description of Indra as he appears in the Vedic, Epic, and Buddhist literature respectively, the reader should consult Macdonell, A. A., *Vedic Mythology*, Hopkins, E. W., *Epic Mythology*, and Rhys Davids, T. W., *Dialogues of the Buddha*, II, pp. 294 ff.³

Probably the oldest (early second century B. C.), and in many ways the most interesting representation of Indra is that of the great verandah relief at Bhājā. Here the deity is represented as riding on his elephant, dominating a whole landscape, and rooting up trees; he wears an enormous turban, holds an elephant goad, and is accompanied by an attendant who holds up a banner, the staff of which ends in a trident. As this relief has been often published and is very well known, it need not be referred to in greater detail here, though the whole composition is one of the most magnificent to be found in the whole range of Indian sculpture.⁴ Some scholars have expressed a doubt as to whether the personage represented is really Indra; it is a fact that some related but much simpler reliefs of Śuṅga and early Āndhra date need not necessarily be identified as representing him; but the Bhājā relief so closely corresponds to the conception of Indra as found in Vedic and Hindu texts, that the identification at Bhājā seems inevitable.

Figures of Indian deities, corresponding to the names of kings such as Agni-mitra, Indra-mitra, etc., decipherable in the legends, appear on the reverse sides of the coins assigned to the Pañcālas.⁵ These coins are generally assigned to the second century B. C., and with some hesitation to the Śuṅga dynasty. The legends are in Brāhmī characters of an early type. But one of the coins (Cunningham, *loc. cit.* Fig. 21) bears a figure of Viṣṇu with four arms; and as no Indian deity is positively known to have been represented with more than two arms or more than one head before the second century A. D., a doubt as to the very early date of the coins must be felt, as in the parallel case of the well-known Ujjain coin bearing the figure of a three-headed Maheśa (Cunningham, *loc. cit.*, Pl. X, Fig. 6). The Viṣṇu coin, however, may be a

¹See especially Rao, T. A. G., *Elements of Hindu Iconography*; Sastri, H. K., *South Indian Gods and Goddesses*.

²Although Indra or Sakka is *vajrapāṇi*, he must not be confused with the Yakṣa Vajrapāṇi, the Buddha's guardian angel: both at Mathurā and in Gandhāra the two are often represented side by side in one and the same scene, as quite distinct persons (Fig. 7). A clear distinction between the two was first established by Sémart, E., *Vajrapāṇi dans les*

sculptures du Gandhāra, XIVth Cong. Int. Orientalists, Vol. I, p. 125.

³Also *Kindred Sayings* (P. T. S.), I, pp. 293 ff. The Buddhist Sakka is undoubtedly the same person as the Vedic and Hindu Indra, though his character is differently conceived.

⁴For this relief see my *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, pp. 23-28 and Pl. VIII.

⁵Cunningham, *Coins of Ancient India*, Pl. VII, Rapson, E. J. *Indian Coins*, p. 13.



FIG. 5. INDRA, EAST GATE, SĀNCĪ



FIG. 6. INDRA (TOP CENTRE), VESSANTARA JĀTĀKA, NORTH GATE, SĀNCĪ



FIG. 7. INDRA-SĀLA-GUHĀ; MATRURĀ; INDRA LOWER RIGHT, VAJRAPĀṆĪ UPPER RIGHT EX COLL. ROSENBERG, PARIS



FIG. 8. INDRA-SĀLA-GUHĀ, DETAIL OF RELIEF FROM LORITĀN TANJAI: INDRA IN CENTRE

PLATE XVI. *Early Indian Iconography: Indra*

late one in the series, or it may be that figures with four arms appeared earlier than the second century A. D., and in any case the coins are old enough to be of interest for our purpose.

Those of Indra-mitra (Cunningham, loc. cit., Pl. VII, Figs. 19, 20) show a figure seated cross-legged on an altar (hardly, I think, "a railing"), with the left elbow extended, the left hand on the thigh, and the right hand raised apparently holding some object; the figure, like that of Viṣṇu in the same series, seems to have four arms. In the second example the deity is seated within a niche or temple. The pose is closely

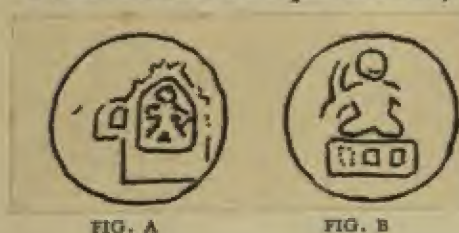


FIG. A

FIG. B

related to that of the early Indian seated Buddha types; but no special significance is to be attached to this fact, inasmuch as the early stock of iconographic types, so far as the main poses go, is a very limited one. Not much more than these details can be made out; the accompanying drawings, Figs. A and B, show as much as appears on photographs of the coins. The three symbols found on the obverse sides

of these coins are almost always the same, and must be regarded as belonging to the dynasty, rather than to particular deities favoured by individual kings; they seem to be, on the left a double umbrella, within a railing, in the centre, a *śrīvatsa*, and a symbol not known by name, on the right.

For other early representations of Indra we have to rely on the Buddhist reliefs of Bharhut, Sāñcī, etc., where, as with Brahmā, the deity is represented in human form whenever the theme requires his presence. This necessity is especially conspicuous in connection with the story of Indra's visit to the Buddha when the latter was residing in the *Inda-sāla guhā*, the *Indra-sāl cave*.^{*} All of the story that it is necessary to recall for our purpose is that Indra, or rather, Sakka, as he is called in the Pali texts, desiring to visit the Buddha at this time, sent his harper Pañcaśikha before him, and when the Buddha's ear had been gained appeared in person.

The oldest representation is that of the Bharhut relief, (Fig. 1) with the contemporary inscription, *Inda-sāla guhā*. The Buddha is not yet, of course, anthropomorphically represented, but his presence is indicated by the empty altar and umbrella within the cave; the rocky landscape without is indicated in the usual manner. On the proper right stood Pañcaśikha with the harp, but the figure is lost, and only the harp remains. It may be that Indra was represented in the missing portion of the medallion on the right, or that he is one of the worshipping figures seen before the altar in the cave, or even that he was not represented at all, as is the case at Bodhgayā (Fig. 4). If one of the worshipping figures, Indra would presumably be the central personage, seated back to the spectator, and wearing a *dupaṭṭa* in addition to the turban and *dbotī* worn by all.

At Bodhgayā, c. 100 B. C. Indra's visit is represented (Fig. 4) at the top of a pillar, the cave is evidently artificial, and a step and railing have been added externally. Above the railing and immediately to the proper right of the cave there seems to be a small tree. Indra himself is not seen; presumably he has not yet arrived. Pañcaśikha, with one hand raised, evidently singing, stands as usual on the proper right. The Buddha as before, is represented by the empty altar, this time without the umbrella.

The beautiful representation of Indra as the Brahman Śānti, in a relief on a railing pillar at Bodhgayā scarcely needs to be referred to in any detail here, as it does not

^{*}A full account of Indra's visit will be found in the *Sakka-paṇḍita Suttanta* (in *Dīgha Nikāya II*) Rhys Davids, T. W., *Dialogues of the Buddha*, II, pp. 299 ff. See also *Dīrghavadāna*, text, p. 394, and other references given by Foucher, loc. cit., p. 491.

On the name *Inda-sāla guhā* (*Inda-sāla guhā* of the Bharhut inscription is the oldest occurrence) see Rhys Davids, T. W., *Dialogues of the Buddha* II, p. 299. The usual Sanskritisation as

Indra-sāla guhā, "The cave in Indra's mountain," seems to be mistaken; it is not even certain that Indra is referred to, as the *I(n)d(e)a-sāla* may have been only a particular kind of *sāl* tree, which gave its name to the cave. Moreover, had a connection between Indra and the mountain been intended, we might expect to find "Sakka-sāla" rather than "Inda-sāla." The name of the mountain in which the cave was found, is given as the "Vediya mountain" in the *Sakka-paṇḍita Suttanta*.



FIG. 9. INDRA-SĀLA-GUHĀ, DETAIL FROM AN ARCHITRAVE, MATHURĀ MUSEUM



FIG. 10. INDRA-SĀLA-GUHĀ, DETAIL FROM A LINTEL,
IN THE LUCKNOW MUSEUM (B 208)



FIG. 11. INDRA-SĀLA-GUHĀ, DETAIL OF A LINTEL FROM MATHURĀ,
IN THE MATHURĀ MUSEUM (H 11)

PLATE XVII. *Early Indian Iconography: Indra*

illustrate the iconography of the deity *in propria persona*. It need only be remarked that Bachhofer is no doubt correct in inferring that inasmuch as this figure is that of a Brahman, not of a Cakravartin appearing as such, the coiffure must consist only of hair, and cannot be described as an *uṣṇīṣa*, in the later sense of a cranial protuberance.⁷

Indra appears in numerous scenes in the Sāñcī reliefs, ca. 100–50 B. C. One of the most interesting is that illustrating the *Śyāma Jātaka*; west *torāṇa*, left pillar, inner face, top panel. Here a King of Benares while hunting has shot the only son of a blind hermit and his wife; but owing to the king's penitence and the parents' grief, Indra restores the boy to life and heals the parents. He appears (Fig. 2) with one attendant in the upper register, together with the father, mother and son; his right hand is raised in a gesture of encouragement, in the left he holds the *amṛta* flask, and he wears an elaborate cylindrical headdress, with laterally projecting wings. Here these projections appear for the first time in Indian art.

Indra appears again in the *Vessantara Jātaka* (Fig. 6), intervening at the moment when Prince Vessantara is about to give away his wife in a gesture of supreme charity; this episode forms a part of the story illustrated on the north *torāṇa*, lower architrave, back, towards the left end. Indra stands at the top of the scene, holding in his right hand the *vajra*, in his left the *amṛta* flask, and wearing a decorated cylindrical headdress, apparently of metal. The elephant to his right may be Airāvata.

In all other of the Sāñcī reliefs in which Indra is seen he is represented as wearing, like other divinities and kings, a turban of the usual early Āndhra type. He is thus represented (if each of the figures is to be identified in the same way) in three compartments of the east *torāṇa*, right front pillar (one shown in Fig. 5). Each of these compartments represents one of the six Kāmāvacāra heavens, but it is only the Trayaśtrimśa heaven, the upper one in our illustration, over which Indra properly and immediately presides. However this problem may be solved, the type is at any rate Indra's. He is represented in the central section of each compartment as a seated king, in *darbār*, with the Yuvarāja or Crown prince seated to his proper right, and dancers and musicians to his left; he wears a turban (approaching Kuṣāna types), and holds in his right hand the *vajra*, in the left the *amṛta* flask.

In the Indra-sāla guhā scene (Fig. 3), north *torāṇa*, left pillar, inner face, top panel, he cannot be recognized by any particular attributes or headdress. This is nevertheless one of the most elaborate treatments of the scene, only less so than the later Graeco-Buddhist relief from Lōriyān Tangai (Fig. 8). The cave has now an arched front, and the empty altar, representing the Buddha, is apparently outside it. The rocky landscape with wild animals is shown in the usual manner, but the rocks are covered with small indentations, a formula repeated in one other Sāñcī relief referred to in a note below. At the very top of the panel, immediately below the abacus of the capital, the rocks are breaking into flames,⁸ this, as more fully explained below, is an effect produced by the presence of deities, Indra and his following. Of the wild animals, two are human-faced rams. The ten worshipping figures below, all standing, are arranged in two ranks. Pañcaśikha is easily recognized by his harp, on the proper left; it may be supposed that Indra is the upper central figure, back to the spectator, the others representing his "ministers and suite." All wear the large early Āndhra turban. Other Sāñcī reliefs in which Indra appears call for no special remark, as he is not distinguished by any special attributes or costume.

During the next hundred years, from ca. 50 B. C. to A. D. 50, I cannot cite any representations of Indra, and it is necessary to pass on to the reliefs from Mathurā, and those of Gandhāra, which date for the most part from the first half of the second century A. D., though some may be rather earlier. Here the Buddha appears for the first time in visible human form; but the problems connected with this development

⁷For this relief see Kramrisch, S., *Grundzüge der indischen Kunst*, p. 83 and Pl. XXXI; and Bachhofer, L., *Ein Pfeilerfigur aus Bodhi-Gaya*, Jahrb. 25. Kunst, Vol. II, 1925.

⁸Clearly shown in Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, Pl. XXIX.

need not concern us here, as the already established *mise en scène* of the Indra-sāla guhā and other compositions remains unchanged.

The first example from Mathurā forms part of a *torāṇa* architrave, now M 3 in the Mathurā Museum. Here, as before, we find a rocky cave, but it is a natural one, and the rocks are indicated in a different way, as if stratified (cf. *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, Fig. 76). On the proper right, as usual, is the Gandharva Pañcaśikha with his harp; he is followed by apsaras bearing garlands, not seen in our illustration (Fig. 9). On the Buddha's left stands Indra in an attitude of worship, wearing the special headdress, somewhat flattened from front to back; behind him are two women, perhaps his wives, and three elephants, of which the central, caparisoned animal must be Airāvata.

Another Mathurā treatment of the Indra-sāla guhā visit is now M 7 in the Indian Museum, Calcutta (Burgess, *Ancient Monuments*, Plate 60, 1): the details are very like those of our Fig. 9, but Indra has only one attendant, and one elephant and his headdress is much like the Gandhāran form of our Fig. 8; also the usual positions are reversed from right to left (unless, as I suspect, it is the reproduction that is reversed).

In another relief from Mathurā, formerly and perhaps still the property of M. L. Rosenberg of Paris, the older formulae are more closely adhered to, but not without some changes (Fig. 7). The cave is artificial, but of simple form; the rocks and wild animals are indicated as usual. Indra stands to the Buddha's left, his hands folded in worship. He wears what is evidently a metal headdress, but not of the usual cylindrical form; a high ornamented plate rises in front, in a manner recalling the modern Parsi turban. Seated on a rock, just above Indra, is the dwarf figure of the Yakṣa Vajrapāṇi, *vajra* in hand; this is the Buddha's tutelary Yakṣa, who however appears much more constantly in Gandhāran than in Mathurā sculptures.

Two other Mathurā reliefs are much alike (Figs. 10 and 11) so far as the Visit of Indra is concerned. Both are parts of lintels. The composition resembles in a general way the last described; but there is an upper register of niches in which are seen gods worshipping the *cūḍā mahā* or Crest Relic, which is seen in the niche immediately above the Buddha's head. In the relief of Fig. 11 Indra is seated in an attitude of worship, cross-legged but with raised knees, in the usual position on the Buddha's left; two followers are seated with him, and behind these three is his elephant Airāvata. This slab is H 11 in the Mathurā Museum. Vogel, *Catalogue* p. 130, says that the turbaned figure standing behind Pañcaśikha, who occupies the usual position, is Indra; but the position of the seated figure beside the elephant, on the Buddha's left, the characteristic *añjali* pose of the hands, and the flat-fronted headdress (as in Plate III, A) serve to identify Indra beyond doubt. The male and female figures behind Pañcaśikha must then be members of Indra's following, his "ministers and suite," to quote the *Sakka-pañha Suttanta*. The other relief (Fig. 10), now B 208 in the Lucknow Museum* is much more elaborate, but so far as our scene is concerned, almost identical; the part on the Buddha's proper right, with the figure of Pañcaśikha, is broken off, only a small portion of the harp being visible.

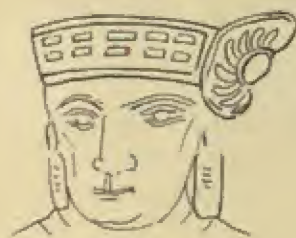


FIG. C

The lower register of the same lintel (published in A.S.I., A.R., 1909-10, Pl. XXV a, but not shown in our illustration) is a series of seated figures representing Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, with Indra kneeling worshipping on the extreme right; he appears here exactly as described above, seated cross-legged with raised knees, wearing the flat-fronted headdress, and worshipping. Another lintel from Mathurā, in the Lucknow Museum, (published *loc. cit.* Fig. 3) preserves three of the previous Buddhas, and Maitreya, with Indra on the right, kneeling, worshipping.

*Vogel, J. Ph., *Catalogue of the Archaeological Museum in Mathura*, p. 163; and in A.S.I., A.R., 1909-10, Pl. XXVIII, 2.

*Vogel, J. Ph., *The Mathura school of sculpture*, A.S.I., A.R., 1909-10, Pl. XXV.

but with a different headdress, consisting of a stiff metal bandeau with a crest like that of the Kuṣāna turban (Fig. c). A group of nine figures, consisting of the Seven Previous Buddhas, Maitreya, and Indra worshipping, thus seems to have been a well-established formulæ, and it is noteworthy that the rule of placing Indra on the proper left of the person he worships is strictly adhered to.

It remains to consider examples from Gandhāra.²² By far the most elaborate is a well-known relief from Lōriyān Tangai, of which a part is illustrated in Fig. 8. Here Indra, wearing a cylindrical headdress, occupies the usual position on the Buddha's left; he is standing, with hands folded (*añjali* pose) in worship, accompanied by his retinue, one of whom holds over his head an umbrella (*chatra*) of dominion. In our illustration, the rocks and wild animals appear as usual, and part of the figure of the Buddha can be seen; but the outer edge of the cave is lined with flames. In the complete relief, the figure of Pañcaśikha is found in the usual position on the proper right.²³

Another relief of the same subject, not illustrated here, appears on the well-known Sikri stupa base.²⁴ Here the figure of Indra is not, I think, shown; for the small worshipping figure behind Pañcaśikha is not only on the wrong side, but is to be associated with two other figures on the same side, all probably members of Indra's following. What is here more remarkable is the fact that on the rocky walls of the cave there are represented certain flame-like twists (Fig. d), which are in fact flames (not, as suggested by Foucher, shrubs). The explanation of this appearance, and also of the flames represented as issuing from the cave in the Lōriyān Tangai relief, and from the rocks in the Sāñcī relief described above, is to be found in the *Sakka-pañha Suttanta*. There we learn, not only that the

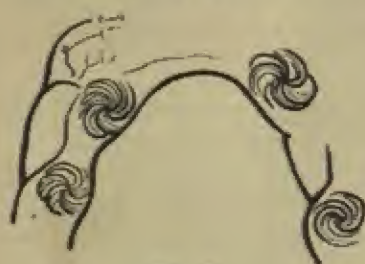


FIG. D

representation of flaming rocks is appropriate in this scene, but that this illumination is not, as usual in Buddhist legend, to be connected with the glory of the Buddha himself, but with that of the gods. The pertinent passages²⁵ state that on the occasion of Sakka's visit the Vēdiya mountain (in which the Indra-sāla cave was found) appeared to be on fire; "for sure," says the text, "the Vēdiya mountain is burning today, such is the potency of the immortals." Also, "within the dark cavern it became bright, such was the potency of the celestials." This explains the representation of flames in all the reliefs.²⁶

Indra can be recognized also in other scenes represented in Graeco-Buddhist art. An interesting unpublished relief, the property of Messrs. Spink, of London, shows three consecutive episodes in the life of the Buddha. On the right (these reliefs are always to be read from right to left, the direction of circumambulation) is seated the emaciated Buddha. On the Buddha's left is Indra, with a cylindrical headdress (Fig. f) and hands folded in worship; he is evidently the representative of the gods who are said to have assem-



FIG. E

²²As remarked by Sēnart, *Vajrapāṇi dans les sculptures du Gandhāra*, XIV. Congr. Int. Orientalists, Vol. I, p. 125. The Gandhāran sculptures derived their type of Indra from that of the old Indian school.

²³For the whole, see Foucher, *L'Art gréco-bouddhique*, . . . , Fig. 246; or Vincent Smith, *History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*, Fig. 60.

²⁴Foucher, *L'Art gréco-bouddhique*, Fig. 247; or *Les bas-reliefs du stupa de Sikri*, J. A., 1903. Cf. also the Mathurā replica, Smith, *Jain stupas of Mathura*, Pl. CVI on the right. Here also in the Descent from the Trayastriṃśa heaven, *ib.* on the left, Indra is seen with the cylindrical headdress.

²⁵Rhys Davids, T. W., *Dialogues of the Buddha*, II, pp. 299 ff.

²⁶In this connection reference may be made to the scene representing the Bodhisattva preaching in the Tūjita heaven, Sāñcī, west toraṇa, right pillar, front, second panel. Here we find a similar formula (Fig. a above). Marshall, *Guide to Sanchi*, p. 71, suggests that we have to do with clouds represented beneath the feet of the gods and among the figures in the upper part of the panel, though "they have the appearance almost of rocks with flames breaking from them." I have no doubt that these are flaming rocks, and for the following reasons: (1) the formula, apart from the flames, is identical with that of the rocks in the Sāñcī Indra-sāla gūhā scene, our Fig. 3; (2) I know of no example in Indian art of clouds represented in this way, nor of gods represented as standing on clouds, and finally (3) we learn from the *Sakka-pañha Suttanta*, as cited above, that the potency of the immortals produces this effect of setting rocks on fire.

bled to honour the Bodhisattva, previous to the Enlightenment. In the centre, the Bodhisattva is seen crossing the Nairāṇjana River, supporting himself by the branch of a tree as he steps ashore. On the left he is seated, now less emaciated, eating the remains of the meal offered by Sujātā. The relief illustrated by Foucher, *L'art gréco-bouddhique* . . . Fig. 193, appears to have formed part of a similar series; the figure on the right is probably Indra, but the headdress, though evidently not an ordinary turban, is not quite intelligible.



FIG. F

In some other reliefs, representing the Nativity, Indra with the cylindrical headdress, is represented as receiving the miraculously born Bodhisattva; a good example now in Berlin is illustrated by Vincent Smith, *loc. cit.*, Pl. XXIX. From another example, in the Lahore Museum, is the head of Indra illustrated in the accompanying illustration (Fig. G). In other cases the deity receiving the child is Brahmā, longhaired and without a headdress, while in still others the deity, who may be Indra, wears a turban. Indra, with the characteristic "haute coiffure," can also be recognized in a Parinirvāṇa scene, published by Foucher, *L'Art gréco-bouddhique*, . . . Fig. 280.



FIG. G

With one possible exception, I have not been able to recognize a single undoubted representation of Indra at Amarāvati, ca. 200 A. D. This exception is to be found in the *Vessantara Jātaka* scene (Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, Pl. XLV, 1), where the elephant is given away, and a figure wearing the cylindrical headdress stands behind the Bodhisattva.

The principal early representations of Indra have thus been accounted for. To sum up the details of the iconography, leaving out of account the Bhājā relief and the rather vague Pañcāla coins, we may say that Indra appears always as a king, often with many attendants, sometimes with the umbrella of dominion; he frequently holds the *amṛta* flask in his left hand, and sometimes the *vajra* in his right; he appears as a worshipper of the Buddha, and almost invariably stands at the Buddha's left side; he is often accompanied by his elephant Airāvata; he is very often, but not invariably distinguished by a special headdress, apparently of metal, often cylindrical (in one case with lateral projections or "wings"), but sometimes flat-fronted like a modern Parsi turban. Indra's crown, *kīṣṭa*, is specifically mentioned in the *Mahābhārata* (2, 7, 4 ff.); it is evidently the prototype of the *kīṣṭa mukuṭa* of the mediæval iconography.¹⁴ On the whole it is clear that while we have to rely almost entirely on Buddhist sources for early representations of Indra, and the Buddhist conception of Indra's character differs a good deal from the Vedic and Hindu, the iconography corresponds as nearly as possible to Indra's appearance as described in the Vedic and Epic books. It is characteristic of the Epic Indra, for example, that he carries the *amṛta* flask, and often restores the dead to life, just as he does in the Buddhist *Syāma Jātaka*. Whether the representations of Indra in Buddhist art are to be regarded as based entirely on the non-Buddhist literary sources, or the corresponding popular beliefs, or whether they reflect the iconography of contemporary non-Buddhist cult images of Indra, can hardly be decided at present; all that we can be sure of is that the Buddhist sculptors did not invent the type. The Gandharva musician Pañcaśikha is unknown to the Epic sources under this name; but Indra has many Gandharva musicians known by other names.

A few remarks may be made with reference to the cylindrical headdress. The early

¹⁴According to the *Mānasa* the *kīṣṭa* is worn by Cakravartins and Adhirājas only.

Indian royal headdress consists of a large muslin turban (*uṣṇīṣa*) interwoven with the long hair, and so tied that a ball of material forms a sort of crest in front. This type may be seen at Bharhut, and the *cūḍā mahā* relic is represented in this way. At Sāñcī the early Āndhra form appears, chiefly distinguished by the more symmetrical crossing of narrow bands of material above the forehead. In the Kuṣāna period the symmetrical bands remain but the crest becomes a decorated metal plate, usually circular or somewhat oval, through which the ends of the material seem to be drawn and knotted; this form is to be seen both at Mathurā and in Gandhāra, and also at Amarāvati. In the early Gupta period the whole coiffure begins to be made of metal, and is greatly elaborated. Throughout the mediæval period an elaborate crown is the general rule, and it is not until about the fifteenth century that turbans again appear.

The history of the cylindrical headdress up to the Gupta period is quite independent of the development of the turban. All the early occurrences are found in connection with Indra, and have been noted above. The form with lateral projections or wings next appears at Amarāvati, where it is worn by King Suddhodana in a scene representing the return of the Buddha to Kapilavastu (Burgess, *Buddhist stupas of Amarāvati* . . . Pl. XLI, 5, at the top). Another example from Amarāvati appears in the representation of the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*,¹⁶ Fergusson, *Tree and Serpent Worship*, Pl. LXXXVI, 1; still another, *ib.* Pl. LXXXIII, 1; another in the accompanying Fig. H. Thus the *kirīṭa* must have come into more general use by the end of the second century A. D., though not yet to the exclusion of the turban.



FIG. H

In the Gupta period and in Pallava art it becomes characteristic for Viṣṇu; as examples amongst others may be cited the rock-cut Viṣṇu outside the Candragupta cave at Udayagiri, Gwalior (not as usually stated, Bhopal), and many at Māmallapuram. In later mediæval art it is constantly met with; the example of the Sultānpur Viṣṇu (*History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, Fig. 222), now in the Lucknow Museum, may be cited as still very near to the Amarāvati form.

Meanwhile the form, styled by French scholars the *coiffure en mitre*, and with or without the lateral projection has reached Siam and Cambodia, where in "Khmer primitif" art, in the sixth and seventh century, it is characteristic both for Viṣṇu, and Indra. It disappears in Khmer classic, but appears in Campā in the eleventh or twelfth century. It is found also in China. There can be little doubt that the form as it thus appears in the Far East is everywhere of Indian origin; it passed no doubt, with so many other motifs, from the Āndhras of Vengī to Indo-China.¹⁷ In India, where as we have seen, it first appears in connection with Indra about 100 B. C. it may be either indigenous, or of Central Asian or Iranian origin, or may prove to have been common to India and Western Asia at an earlier date.

¹⁶Identified by Charpentier, *Paceka-Buddha Geschichte*, Upsala, 1908, pp. 110-11.

¹⁷For the cylindrical headdress in Indo-China, see Charpentier, H., *L'Art khmer primitif*, Vol. I., pp. 301-308; also Coedès,

G., *Recent archaeological progress in Siam*, Indian art and Letters, N. S., Vol. I, 1927; *Bulletin of the Museum of Fine Arts*, Boston, No. 153, 1928.



FIG. 1. THE TING. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM



FIG. 2. THE TUI. METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

PLATE XVIII. *The Four Bronze Vessels of the Marquis of Ch'i*

PRINTED AT THE PRESS OF
EDWARD STERN & COMPANY
INCORPORATED
PHILADELPHIA

(132) *End*

↑

Ms. A. 9. 2
1814/15

Archaeological Library

23839

Call No. 704-940954 / 100

Author—Coomaraswamy, A.K.

Title—Early Indian Iconography.

Borrower No.

Date of Issue

"A book that is shut is but a block"

CENTRAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL LIBRARY
GOVT. OF INDIA
Department of Archaeology
NEW DELHI.

Please help us to keep the book
clean and moving.